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ONTARIO GOVERNMENT REDUCING HEALTH CARE WAIT TIMES

New Wait Time Data Shows Double-Digit Drops in the Central West Area

TORONTO – New data shows the Ontario government's Wait Time Strategy is resulting in decreases in wait times for many key health services in the Central West Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) area, Health and Long-Term Care Minister George Smitherman announced today.

"Trends in the Central West LHIN area are encouraging with significant decreases in wait times for a number of key health services," Smitherman said. "Through leadership and hard work of thousands of front line health professionals the Wait Time Strategy is clearly achieving real results for patients by improving access to care, closer to home."

As a result of the government's Wait Time Strategy, wait times in which nine out of 10 patients have completed their surgery or have had their exam in the Central West LHIN area have decreased significantly since August/September 2005 by:

- 64.6 per cent for cataract surgery (283 days)
- 55.7 per cent for CT scans (54 days)
- 34.1 per cent for cancer surgery (29 days)
- 25.5 per cent for hip replacement (91 days)
- 12.3 per cent for knee replacement (41 days).

At the same time, Smitherman acknowledged one health service area that remains a challenge – there has been a 48.6 per cent increase in wait times in MRI scans since August/September 2005.

"We continue to make significant investments in MRI scans and we expect to see improvements in wait times for this area," Smitherman said.

Since the launch of the Wait Time Strategy, the Ontario government has invested $22,825,100 for additional procedures in hospitals in the Central West LHIN area, including:

- 4,655 cataract surgeries ($3,341,350)
- 1,281 cardiac procedures ($2,007,450)
- 1,256 hip and knee joint replacements ($9,089,862)
- 603 cancer surgeries ($2,370,598)
- 17,748 hours, 26,622 exams MRI ($5,399,840)
- 2,464 hours, 8,624 exams CT ($616,000).

The new wait time data is available at www.ontariowaittimes.com, which is closing in on nearly 4 million hits as of today.

"We are seeing solid progress being made and we do see opportunities for improvement," says Mimi Lowi-Young, Central West LHIN CEO. "LHINs will play an increasingly significant role in shaping the way patients within the Central West LHIN access care, and how that is managed will be crucial to effecting positive change in wait times."

"We know that improving patient wait times is a priority for the residents in the Central West LHIN," explains Joe McReynolds, Board Chair of the Central West LHIN. "The role of the Central West LHIN is to work together with health service providers to ensure patients are receiving the health care they need at the right time, in the right location and by the right care professional."

Today's initiative is part of the McGuinty government's plan for innovation in public health care, building a system that delivers on three priorities – keeping Ontarians healthy, reducing wait time and providing better access to doctors and nurses.

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